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17 August 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: TSS/APD

ATTENTION :

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SUBJECT : Prototypes, "Boowu" Electronic Flash Copy
Sets and "Contoura" Flash Reflex Copy Lights

1. The above prototypes are now undergoing evaluation tests in this area. We feel such tests will not be final or conclusive until the prototypes have been sent to field areas where they may be tested under operational conditions. To keep your files current, however, we are pleased to send you the following information.

2. BOOWU: Our very first experience with this copy set was when a member of this Division, who had never seen it before, was able to produce good negatives on Microfile film within twenty minutes; processing included. While the film was not thoroughly washed, it was sufficient for fast printing with re-wash to follow. Several others in the Division also have used this prototype with very satisfactory results. We followed this by sending the prototype to another Division where it was used and seen by at least eight case officers. Seven of the eight stated the prototype was most useful; the eighth said it was very good but was of the opinion he could accomplish the same thing with regular electronic flash units. In PD we feel the cord which connects the two power packs could be longer so that its use would be more flexible in the hands of an experienced photographer. For the beginner the cloth pattern provided is sufficient to enable him to obtain usable negatives; and, if he follows the instructions, he will not use the extra length of cord. At this time we feel this unit is just about what is desired for meeting many operational requirements.

CONTOURA: This prototype presents more of a problem insofar as we are concerned. We have found this unit to be somewhat bulky and awkward to handle. Some of the suggestions we have for your consideration are:

a. Grommets should be placed around the tubes where glass to metal contact is possible.

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b. The outside of the case to have rounded edges and corners which will not catch when withdrawn from a carrying case.

c. If at all possible the thickness of the unit should be reduced.

d. The light falls off too much along the edges. Perhaps a kind of star filter might be utilized. In connection with this we have found that, in using the unit, the inflated pressure sack has to be placed very accurately over the center of the copy. If this is not done each time, marginal notes on legal-size paper could be lost. Such accurate placement of the printer for each copy would mean fewer copies could be obtained on an operational job.

e. In the original thinking toward the construction of this prototype it was felt one discharge of the tube should be sufficient to obtain a good reflex negative from any copy. We now wonder if this was the correct approach. As it now stands there is no provision for variation of light intensity, and we now are of the opinion this would be a desirable feature if it could be accomplished. On any copy which now might require more exposure, the unit has to be held motionless over the copy while recharging takes place; and, due to the inflated pressure sack, the unit tends to roll or creep slightly producing unsharp negatives. There also might be instances where it would be imperative to have less light intensity without having to resort to the use of filters. We visualize this machine as being particularly useful on one-shot jobs where negatives would not be processed immediately, where many negatives would be made in a very short time. We feel the above features would be most helpful in the hands of one trained in the use of the machine.

f. In order to increase the versatility of this unit, provision for conversion to a contact printer would, in our estimation, be a great asset. Perhaps the pressure sack might be made removable, and a simple platen arrangement developed which could slide or clip on if so desired. The use of the pressure sack, for reflex, or the platen, for contact printing, could be attached to the unit before the operator would go out on a job.

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3. We feel the Contoura is close to being a useful unit, but it still requires some thought, discussion, and engineering consideration.

4. The next step PD will take is to place these prototypes in field stations where they will receive careful and thorough evaluation. We are now trying to make decision as to where they will be sent. This is somewhat difficult since changes in some areas are taking place currently and we wish to be certain our selected photographers will do the testing.

5. We feel both of these units have great potentials, and we greatly appreciate the efforts of TSS/APD in obtaining them. We shall keep you informed as to the progress of the evaluations we shall receive from the field.


Chief, TSS/Photographic Division

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